



NOACA Safety and Operations Council
Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2025
NOACA Offices
1299 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio

Present: Please see the attached attendance record.

Mr. James Kusner, Vice Chair of Safety and Operations Council, convened the meeting at 1:05 p.m.

New Member

- Kirk Dimmick, Alternate for Alan Exley, Lake County Engineer

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Lawrence Hall made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 15, 2025. Mr. Jacob VanSickle seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

No public comments were made at this meeting.

Executive Director's Report

The following announcements were made by NOACA staff:

Ms. Sarah White made the following announcement about the 2025 CMAQ application round:

- Eligible Projects
 - Vehicle/Machinery Updates
 - Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities
 - Traffic Signal Timing/Connection Hardware
 - Air Quality Education Programs
- Key Dates & Information
 - Applications Available Mid-March
 - Applicant Webinar Early April
 - For more information visit www.noaca.org/cmaq or email projects@mpo.noaca.org

NOACA Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) Program Community Projects Funding Opportunity

Mr. Joe MacDonald made the following announcement about the CPRG funding opportunity:

- Funding & Eligibility
 - \$300,000 allocated for local climate action planning & engagement (community projects)
 - Eligible counties: Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina
 - Cuyahoga County projects will be coordinated through Cleveland's CPRG planning budget

- Key Dates & Information
 - Application Deadline: April 14, 2025, by 4:30 p.m.
 - Applicant Webinar: March 13, 2025, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
 - Application and webinar details: noaca.org/community-assistance-center/funding-programs/carbon-reduction-program-crp/cprg-solicitation

Action Items

No action items have been presented at this meeting.

Presentation/Discussion Items

Recap of NOACA Transportation Day (December 3, 2024)

Ms. Bev Burtzlaff stated that NOACA Transportation Day was a comprehensive and impactful event, focusing on the crucial topic of safety in communities. She presented the following:

- Safety Summit Overview
 - Event: NOACA Transportation Day
 - Theme: Transportation Safety
 - Date: December 3
 - Invitees: Mayors, county elected officials, board members, planners, engineers, council members
 - Focus: Discuss strategies to improve safety, available funding, and advocacy for better safety policies in communities
- Safety Summit Speakers
 - Kate Harley and Brent Bogard from ODOT Safety Team
 - Angie Schmitt, local author and planner, founder of 3mph
 - Rebecca Byrne, Medina County Sheriff's Office
 - Tina Wawszkiewicz, Deputy Director of Transportation and Mobility, City of Dublin, Ohio
 - Steve Peganoff, GCRTA
 - Jenna Thomas, Bike Cleveland
 - Mayor Justin Bibb, City of Cleveland
 - Mayor Kahlil Seren, City of Cleveland Heights
 - Kat Bray, Lorain County Public Health
 - NOACA staff
 - Sam Schweikert
 - Kessa Turnbull
 - Rob Uhlhorn

Ms. Burtzlaff highlighted the event's goal of inclusivity by engaging mayors and officials from across the five-county region. Emphasizing safety as a top priority, she acknowledged the persistently high crash rates post-COVID. She expressed hope that the event offered valuable insights and actionable strategies for enhancing community safety. Additionally, she encouraged members to reach out to her for support or to share relevant information.

Ms. Burtzlaff continued her presentation on the following information:

- Key Takeaways
 - ODOT is a partner
 - Planning & prep are paramount:
 - Design & engineering
 - Public education & outreach
 - Advocacy & funding
 - Community support needed, but may lag
 - Funding is crucial
 - Testimonials are impactful

- Emerging technologies are helpful
- Existing NOACA Initiatives
 - SAVE Plan
 - Community Safety reports
 - Street Supplies program
 - Legislative advocacy and communications
 - Funding Resources webpage
 - Safety prioritized in LRP and TIP development

Ms. Burtzloff stated that NOACA will continue seeking input to enhance NOACA's safety resources for communities, including on:

- Collaboration with local communities
- Additional funding for safety
- Technical assistance

Mr. Rob Knopf emphasized the need for a law prohibiting bicyclists from using their phones. He shared his observations of cyclists distracted by music, texting, or other activities, seemingly unaware of their surroundings. He stressed the importance of enforcing traffic laws for bicyclists, citing instances where riders traveled against traffic or made unsafe left turns on red. He believed that stricter enforcement of traffic regulations for bicyclists would significantly reduce incidents.

Ms. Burtzloff emphasized the importance of education for all transportation system users.

Mr. VanSickle stated that the majority of crashes in the City of Cleveland are not caused by cyclists using their phones. After reviewing every crash in 2024, he found that very few bicyclists or pedestrians were at fault for incidents that often resulted in fatalities or severe, life-altering injuries.

Ms. Burtzloff highlighted that one of NOACA's major advocacy efforts in recent years was supporting Governor DeWine's distracted driving initiative, which has now become law. She noted that ODOT is reporting a significant reduction in crashes, attributing the decline to this legislation. She emphasized that distracted driving remains a concern and stressed the importance of driver education.

Mr. Duffala stated that speed limits should not be open to interpretation. He noted that Lorain County frequently receives requests to lower speed limits, but the county follows proper safety studies and the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) procedures before making changes. Despite being informed of these requirements, residents often continue to push for further reductions. He also pointed out that driving too slowly can pose safety risks on the road.

Ms. Burtzloff acknowledged Mr. Duffala's point and noted that Ohioans for Safe Streets are working to address the issue. She mentioned that NOACA is examining how other states handle speed limit reductions, emphasizing that not every request is justified and should be supported by studies. She explained that Ohioans for Safe Streets aims to make the process more efficient and less costly for communities, as current procedures can take years and cost thousands of dollars. NOACA is exploring ways to streamline this process.

Mr. Knopf emphasized that studies are necessary to prevent City Councils from arbitrarily lowering speed limits. He recalled an instance when he was a City Engineer in Avon, where the City Council reduced the speed limit on a state route to 35 mph. However, when the City received a federal grant for work on the State Route (SR) 611 bridge, ODOT required the speed limit to be restored because the Council had lowered it illegally without justification or notification. He also noted that Avon attempted to lower the speed limit on Detroit Road to 25 mph, but ODOT maintained that it should remain at 35 mph. Mr. Knopf agreed with ODOT, stressing that common sense should guide speed limit decisions rather than pressure from a vocal minority.

Ms. Burtzlaff stated that speed limit decisions must consider multiple factors and cannot be made arbitrarily or based solely on vocal minorities. She noted that mayors are aware of this, and lowering speed limits is not always a popular decision. Mayors do not seek to reduce speed limits without proper studies. NOACA is examining the context of roadways, considering factors such as the proximity of homes to the street, the presence of schools and parks, and whether children frequently cross the area. She emphasized that studies must support any speed limit changes.

Mr. Knopf believed that there should be sidewalks on both sides of all state routes, citing safety concerns. Living off SR 83 in Avon, he notes that the road is busy throughout the day with a 45 mph speed limit, which he finds acceptable. However, he highlights the inconvenience and danger posed by sidewalks being present on only one side, forcing pedestrians to cross every half mile. This makes it particularly difficult for those residing on the side without a sidewalk.

Ms. Burtzlaff expressed her support for the need for sidewalks and believed few would argue against them. Living off Lake Avenue in Lakewood, she highlighted existing bike lanes, on-street parking, a nearby school, and Lakewood Park, all of which contribute to traffic concerns. She noted that frequent crash incidents have prompted city studies, leading to a speed limit reduction from 35 mph to 30 mph. She shared her observations that this small change has made drivers more cautious and aware, reinforcing her belief that lowering speed limits can have a meaningful impact on safety.

Mr. Hall highlighted an important perspective on traffic safety, referencing a recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) survey. According to the survey, 90% of drivers choose speeds they personally feel are safe, suggesting that speed limits alone may not significantly influence driving behavior. While he acknowledged the value of lowering speed limits in communities, he emphasized the need to focus on road design changes to enhance safety.

Ms. Burtzlaff agreed with Mr. Hall, emphasizing that road design and infrastructure play an important role in traffic safety. While speed limit signs are important, she pointed out that wide, open roads often encourage faster driving, regardless of posted limits. She stressed that there is more to safety than just speed limits and asked members for input on how NOACA could support communities, including suggestions for potential funding programs NOACA could develop.

Mr. Scott Ockunzzi suggested that if NOACA had available funding or a task order consultant, it could assist communities with smaller-scale traffic studies, such as speed studies and intersection analyses. He proposed that these resources could be effectively utilized to address local traffic concerns and improve road safety.

Ms. Burtzlaff noted that many communities in the region, especially smaller ones, lack the funds to conduct traffic studies.

Mr. Kusner pointed out that ODOT has safety funds available through the HSIP (Highway Safety Improvement Program). However, accessing these funds often requires a traffic study, which can be a barrier for communities that need them the most, particularly less affluent areas that may lack the resources to conduct such studies.

Ms. Burtzlaff agreed with Mr. Kusner.

Ms. Burtzlaff praised the Safety Summit as a valuable event and emphasized that NOACA wants to continue the discussion on improving safety. She expressed the organization's commitment to exploring ways to enhance safety measures and support communities in their efforts to create safer roadways.

Cost-Benefit Analysis of FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures

Ms. Kessa Turnbull presented information on the following:

- History of Proven Safety Countermeasures
- Countermeasures & Costs, Crash Data, and Crash Costs
- Contributors of Crashes
 - Key Contributors to Crashes
 - NOACA 2024 Analysis
- Common Causes of Crashes
 - Human Mistakes
 - Inadequate Infrastructure
- Analysis
 - Crash causes breakdown (2024 data): 48% what should not be there, but is and 52% what should be there, but is not
 - Average crash cost: \$75,010
 - Infrastructure deficit impact: 52% of \$75,010 = \$38,632
- Calculations: expected crash reductions x \$38,632 = estimated annual savings from fewer crashes
- Timeline for Projected Savings
- Non-motorized Countermeasures
- Motorized Countermeasures
- Example: Non-motorized countermeasure – Brunswick
- Example: Motorized countermeasure – Elyria
- Safe Returns
- Cost-Benefit Ratio Analysis Chart

Ms. Turnbull stated that NOACA is exploring the creation of a new safety fund to help implement FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) safety countermeasures at the community level. She emphasized that NOACA will continue evaluating the feasibility of funding a new safety program to support local traffic safety improvements.

Mr. Kusner questioned whether the safety benefit calculation was based on crash costs multiplied by 0.52, representing the portion attributed to infrastructure. He also inquired whether FHWA crash reduction factors apply to all crashes or only to those occurring in areas where infrastructure deficiencies were identified.

Ms. Turnbull explained that she aimed to select countermeasures applicable to all crash levels, not just injury crashes, for simplicity. Even after categorizing crashes by pedestrian, bicyclist, and motorist, staff continued to consider all pedestrian-related crashes rather than only pedestrian injury crashes, ensuring a differentiated approach.

Mr. Knopf asked if a crosswalk was implemented in Brunswick.

Ms. Turnbull stated that the reports were still being written and had not been completed yet. She expressed hope that the crosswalk would be implemented in the future.

Mr. Knopf inquired whether NOACA would conduct a study after implementation to compare pedestrian activity before and after the project, assessing whether it effectively improves pedestrian safety.

Ms. Turnbull said that would be a good idea.

Mr. Knopf noted that one of the biggest issues with many studies is the potential manipulation of statistics by removing certain outliers. He emphasized the importance of demonstrating the

project's impact, as showing that it was implemented successfully and improved conditions could encourage more people to walk in the area.

Ms. Turnbull stated that she has been advocating for NOACA to conduct before-and-after studies on crash rates. She also expressed strong support for the idea of conducting before-and-after counts.

Mr. Knopf compared the situation to bike lanes, noting that while hundreds of miles of bike lanes are being added in various locations, it remains unclear whether there has been an actual increase in bike usage.

Ms. Turnbull expressed interest in reviewing the studies that have been conducted for this region.

Mr. Duffala asked about which crashes were analyzed to determine the 52%/48% split shown in the presentation.

Ms. Turnbull stated that she reviewed 2024 crashes in the NOACA region using three specific fields from crash reports completed by law enforcement. One field allowed officers to enter a code indicating if a collision was caused by a specific mistake. If this field was selected, she included the crash in the statistic. Another field was the impairment category, which she counted if it indicated alcohol use, phone usage, or speeding. She categorized these crashes separately, as addressing them would likely require educating people, making policy changes, or developing technological solutions. She acknowledged that while improved infrastructure can reduce crash severity and potentially lower crash occurrence, it cannot fully prevent reckless behavior, such as drunk driving.

Mr. Duffala asked Ms. Turnbull whether she was analyzing only pedestrian crashes or all crashes.

Ms. Turnbull said she was looking at all crashes.

Mr. Duffala further inquired about the analysis and questioned whether infrastructure-related issues accounted for as many as 94 crashes. He felt that number seemed high at first glance and asked Ms. Turnbull how she arrived at that figure. He noted that he did not believe cyclists were permitted on I-90 near Elyria.

Ms. Turnbull clarified that the location in question was not I-90 but SR 57, near I-90.

Mr. Schipper asked whether the potential projects being studied would eventually be implemented as real projects.

Ms. Turnbull responded that staff hope the studied projects will eventually be implemented.

Mr. Schipper asked whether the projects would receive funding directly or if they would be included in another grant application that NOACA is preparing. He noted that some projects have a high rate of return and seem beneficial but questioned whether they would be implemented.

Mr. Makarachi stated that NOACA staff have begun developing a plan, with countermeasures outlined in the Community Safety Reports (CSR). He clarified that staff are working on a planning report rather than an implementation report. NOACA is providing information to communities and seeking funding for safety initiatives. Similar to the TLCI Implementation Program, communities could submit project requests, and if a project demonstrates high returns, NOACA may allocate funds to support it.

Ms. Turnbull stated that the idea is still in its early stages. Staff have been discussing the feasibility of creating a safety fund and whether NOACA has the necessary resources to implement it.

Mr. Schipper inquired about the types of projects that fall within the "excellent to favorable" range in the cost-benefit ratio analysis.

Ms. Turnbull stated that the projects in the "excellent to favorable" cost-benefit range were primarily motorized transportation projects, as they generally yield significantly higher returns.

Ms. Hinal Sorathiya stated that the projects in Lake County had the highest returns.

Mr. Schipper stated that it would be beneficial for project sponsors to understand the types of projects that yield a high return.

Ms. Turnbull reiterated that motorized projects generally have the highest returns, but she cautioned that this is largely because 92% of the region's population primarily drives, leading to higher base numbers. As a multimodal transportation agency, NOACA must also consider how to balance different transportation modes. She emphasized that prioritizing only motorized countermeasures based on return rates would not be ideal, as motorized users have the protection of a vehicle, whereas non-motorized users do not.

Mr. Schipper acknowledged that buses are generally safer but still experience crashes. He noted that safety exists in various contexts and, while motorized users have protective shells, approximately 1,000 people die on Ohio roads each year, highlighting the ongoing need for safety improvements.

Mr. Makarachi stated that NOACA would allow individual communities to make the final decisions regarding project implementation.

Mr. Schipper suggested that, based on the study, it would be beneficial to determine whether communities could add extra borders to traffic lights. He noted that this could provide a significant return and improve safety for everyone at intersections.

Mr. Kusner asked whether the results for these locations would be shared with the individual communities.

Mr. Makarachi said yes. He stated that an aggregated list of projects with a high return would be prioritized and made available on NOACA's website.

Mr. Hall expressed support for the idea of an additional fund for safety projects but acknowledged that funding is not always readily available. He pointed out that existing funding sources, such as the Highway Safety Improvement Program, STBG, and CMAQ, could be used for safety initiatives. He encouraged NOACA and its communities to be proactive in pursuing and implementing these projects, even if NOACA does not secure new funding.

Ms. Turnbull noted that federal funds come with significant administrative requirements, which can be a burden for small communities. While cities like Cleveland, Painesville, and Lorain are experienced in securing and managing federal funding, smaller communities and rural towns may lack the expertise to navigate the process. She expressed hope that NOACA could assist these smaller communities in accessing and administering federal funds.

Mr. Chris Schoenig requested to see the slide displaying motorized countermeasures, specifically the one with photos of SR 57.

Mr. Makarachi stated that the presentations are available on NOACA's website.

Congestion Management Plan (CMP) Update

Mr. Derek Taylor presented information on the following:

- eNEO2050+ Goals and Objectives
- CMP Steps
- Objectives for both eNEO2050 and eNEO2050+ (tables)
- Congested Corridors
- Congested Highway Corridors (maps)
- Congested Interchanges/Intersections

Mr. Taylor stated that in the future, NOACA staff will evaluate progress towards the CMP Objectives using the latest congestion data and tools. The Council will continue to be updated on the progress of congestion planning.

Mr. Kusner stated that he was not the point person for the Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI) project but offered to provide Mr. Taylor and Mr. Makarachi with updated information. He mentioned that the project schedule had encountered a slight delay.

Mr. Taylor said that receiving an update would be helpful.

Mr. Knopf asked where NOACA obtained its data.

Mr. Taylor stated that most of NOACA's data comes from its Travel Demand Model. He explained that staff calibrate the model to reflect current traffic conditions, making it a strong tool for measuring travel time across the region and analyzing mode share. The calibrated model is used to evaluate various transportation measures.

Mr. Hall asked whether cell phone data or vehicle data was used to evaluate the information.

Mr. Taylor responded that NOACA does not use cell phone or vehicle data; instead, the data is estimated based on NOACA's calibrated model.

Mr. Knopf asked whether NOACA uses traffic counts to assess the percentage of error in the information.

Mr. Taylor stated that NOACA collects hundreds of traffic counts annually and uses them to calibrate the model. He explained that the model provides a reliable estimate of current traffic conditions, which is essential for planning since there are no direct traffic counts available for future years like 2050. The model enables staff to forecast future traffic patterns.

Mr. Knopf then asked how NOACA staff differentiates between single drivers and multiple-occupancy vehicles.

Mr. Taylor stated that NOACA gathers data from sources such as the Household Travel Survey, census data, and the American Community Survey (ACS). The model provides estimates that are compared to real-world data for validation. For instance, the 4.7% figure from 2020 aligns closely with actual conditions. Staff perform thorough validation and calibration to ensure accuracy, allowing the model to evaluate every segment in the region equally.

Mr. Makarachi added that NOACA collects unbiased data through traffic counts and the Household Travel Survey, assessing the accuracy of the model. He noted that this is the standard practice for all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the U.S. and many other countries. NOACA collects data in September and October, when schools are in session and traffic patterns

are normal. The agency incorporates data from traffic counts, trip generation, mode choice, and transit agencies, adjusting mode choice as needed. Additionally, NOACA utilizes Ohio Turnpike data from entrance and exit ramps, which provides valuable insights. He emphasized that NOACA relies on multiple data sources, not just one.

Mr. Knopf asked if the NOACA Household Travel Survey is based on 2,000 homes.

Mr. Makarachi responded that it is not. He explained that the Household Travel Survey is updated every ten years, and for the last survey, NOACA collected data from 8,000 households. Household data serves as one of the parameters used for calibration, providing information such as car ownership and household size, which are fundamental for trip generation modeling. The total sample size for the most recent survey was 750,000. He emphasized that the survey is just one of many data sources used to calibrate the model, with NOACA utilizing information from at least eight different sources.

Mr. Knopf observed that, based on his personal experience while driving home, he rarely sees vehicles with more than one occupant, suggesting that single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) use remains dominant.

Mr. Taylor responded that about 10% of people telecommute, and these individuals are counted as non-single occupancy vehicle (non-SOV) users in the data.

Mr. Knopf then asked if Mr. Taylor was specifically referring to people who work from home when mentioning the 10% telecommuting rate.

Mr. Taylor confirmed that telecommuters, since they do not travel to a workplace, are classified as non-SOV users, and telecommuting is factored into the overall transportation data.

Mr. Knopf said he would not include telecommuters because they are not driving.

Mr. Taylor stated that people who now work from home previously commuted by car.

Mr. Makarachi added that the percentage of people working from home has increased from 4% in 2019 to over 11%. He explained that NOACA uses the American Community Survey (ACS) as a key data source for performance measurement. He also noted that Mr. Taylor analyzed data from 2023.

Mr. Makarachi provided details about NOACA's Travel Demand Model, which includes:

- 100,000 links (road segments)
- 30,000 zones
- 20,000 scripted lines
- 24-hour processing time to run scenarios

Mr. Makarachi stated that the Travel Demand Model simulates all trips and is highly complex, requiring significant computation to generate results.

Mr. Taylor explained that the Congestion Management Plan focuses on reducing congestion by encouraging shifts in travel modes. Strategies include promoting transit use, biking, walking, and telecommuting. He emphasized that increasing telecommuting can significantly reduce regional congestion. NOACA aims to take a comprehensive approach by considering all possible solutions.

Mr. Schipper asked for clarification on the meaning of "door-to-door" travel.

Mr. Taylor explained that the model estimates total travel time from departure to arrival, considering the entire trip duration. This includes not only time spent in a vehicle but also transfer time and any mode changes along the route.

Mr. Schipper reiterated that he wanted to ensure a clear understanding of the door-to-door definition.

Mr. Taylor stated that people compare their total door-to-door travel time with the time it takes to drive. If this time can be reduced, more people would be willing to take transit.

Mr. Hall noted that NOACA follows the required measures along with some additional specific ones, aligning with FHWA's best practices. He expressed appreciation, on behalf of FHWA, for Mr. Taylor and Mr. Makarachi's hard work on the Congestion Management Plan.

Reports/Updates

No reports/updates were presented at this meeting.

Old Business

No old business was discussed at this meeting.

New Business

No new business was discussed at this meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. Duffala made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:32 p.m. Mr. Knopf seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

The Safety and Operations Council (SOC) will hold its next meeting at NOACA offices May 16, 2025, at 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Note: Additional information on the agenda items can be found on [NOACA's website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).



**Safety and Operations Council (SOC)
2025 Attendance Record**

| Meeting Dates | 2/21/25 | 5/16/25 | 8/15/25 | 11/21/25 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| BYINGTON , Angela (Mark Papke, Alternate) | | | | |
| DRUM , Brian (Alternate not designated) | | | | |
| EXLEY , Alan (Kirk Dimmick, Alternate) | A | | | |
| HAUPT , Andy (Katie Taylor, Alternate) | | | | |
| HOLMES , Gordon (Thomas Mandzak, Alternate) | A | | | |
| KLAIBER , Bob (Shaun Duffala, Alternate) | A | | | |
| KNECHT , Daniel (Nick Finotti, Alternate) | | | | |
| KUSNER , James (Tony Toth, Alternate) | X | | | |
| TBD – FHWA (Lawrence Hall, Alternate) | A | | | |
| MAVEC , Rob (Rob Knopf, Alternate) | A | | | |
| MIELKE , Scott (Alternate not designated) | | | | |
| NEIL , Matthew (Alternate not designated) | | | | |
| OCKUNZZI , Scott (Julie Cichello, Alternate) | X | | | |
| PYANOWSKI , Chris (Chris Schoenig, Alternate) | A | | | |
| RAY , David (A.J. Stoll, Alternate) | X | | | |
| SCHIPPER , Mike (Floun’say Caver, Alternate) | X | | | |
| VANSICKLE , Jacob (Jenna Thomas, Alternate) | X | | | |
| WOLF , Josh (Alternate not designated) | | | | |

X = Member present

A = Alternate present